

SMALL THINGS NOT TO BE DESPISED

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“For who hath despised the day of small things?”
Zechariah 4:10

IT is a very great folly to despise “the day of small things,” for it is usually God’s way to begin His great works with small things. We see it every day, for the first dawn of light is but feeble, and yet by and by, it grows into the full noontide heat and glory. We know how the early spring comes with its buds of promise, but it takes some time before we get to the beauties of summer or the wealth of autumn.

How tiny is the seed that is sown in the garden, yet out of it there comes the lovely flower! How small is the acorn, but how great is the oak that grows up from it! The stream commences with but a gentle rivulet, but it flows on till it becomes a brook, and soon a river—perhaps a mighty Amazon, ere its course is run.

God begins with men in “the day of small things,” He began so with us. How little and how feeble were we when first we came upon the scene of action! He that is now a giant was once so feeble that he could not move from place to place except as he was carried in his mother’s arms. Let us, then, not despise “the day of small things,” as we see that God begins with littles in nature and amongst the sons and daughters of men. And I am sure that He does so in the great work of His church.

Long ago, He began to build a spiritual temple for His own habitation, but at first, the stones of the foundation were hidden from the great mass of mankind. How little was known in the world at large concerning Abraham and his seed! How very, very slowly did the walls of that great temple rise! Even in the time of Zechariah, it was still “the day of small things” with the people of the Lord.

Comparatively speaking, it is so still, for what is the Christian church compared with the great mass of the heathen world and of those who reject the Savior? Our Lord’s method of spreading His truth among men was to begin with a handful of disciples in an upper room at Jerusalem, to fill them with His Spirit, and then to let them be scattered over the whole known world. This is usually God’s plan of working in His church, and also in individual believers.

Of course, there are various degrees of ability and grace even among the Lord’s own people. One of the old Puritans said that some men are born with beards, and certainly, there are some believers who, almost as soon as they are converted, seem to take great strides, and to make speedy advances, so that they soon become very useful, and are able even to teach things which others only learn after long years of experience.

But generally speaking, this is the order of the growth of grace in the heart, “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” First, truth is heard and felt, and the heart bleeds under conviction of guilt. By and by, another truth is discovered, and the wounded heart is bound up by faith in Christ. This faith grows to full assurance, there is a gradual conformity to the image of Christ, and that image becomes more and more clear till the man reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ Jesus.

But first there is the beginning which is small, and afterwards there is the latter end which shows a great increase. It is within our souls as it is in the world without, the day begins with the dawn, but the shining light “shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

Woe unto that man who despises “the day of small things” in the church of Christ, or who despises “the day of small things” in any individual believer, for it is God’s day, it is a day out of which great things will yet come, and therefore he that despises it really despises his Maker’s work, and despises the great and glorious things which are to come out of the small things which are at present apparent!

I know some professing Christians who, I am afraid, despise “the day of small things” in little churches. There is gathered a small community of godly people, perhaps they are poor, and many of them illiterate, and some of you rich folk, who think yourselves wonderfully intelligent—though I am not always sure that you are—if you happen to settle down in that village, you say that you would like to attend the little chapel or mission room, but the minister puts his h’s in the wrong place, and his speech is ungrammatical, and of course that is very painful to your refined taste.

Then the people are very poor, and you hardly think that the church is advancing at all, so to help it you leave it alone! “God forbid,” you say, “that we should despise the day of small things!” But you are very sorry that everything is on such a small scale. You say that you pity the poor people, but instead of helping them, you lie quietly by, or you go off to a more fashionable place where you meet with some of your own class and feel more at home.

There, the h’s are put in properly, though the Gospel is left out of the preaching, but the people who attend are such a “respectable” sort of folk that you feel it is quite the correct thing to worship with them. If any of you have any respect for yourselves while acting in such a way as that, I hope you will soon discover that there is really nothing “respectable” in that kind of respectability, I mean that there is nothing that should make a man respected when he gives up his convictions, and leaves his own true brethren for the sake of getting into a better class of society, and seeming to be of a superior order to the godly poor people to whom he might be of real service.

To me, it seems that it should be your glory to join the poorest and weakest churches of your denomination, and wherever you go, to say, “This little cause is not as strong as I should like it to be, but by the grace of God, I will make it more influential. At any rate, I will throw in my weight to strengthen the weak things of Zion, and certainly I will not despise the day of small things”

Where would have been our flourishing churches of today if our forefathers had disdained to sustain them while they were yet in their infancy? I thank God for the men who did not mind going down into back yards and up into haylofts that they might worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. I delight in those who were willing to stand on the village green, with the people sitting down on felled trees or logs to listen to them, and who were not afraid of being called fanatics, and of bearing all manner of reproach and scorn for Christ’s sake.

But if you and I grow to be such great and grand people as some we have known, we must mind that the Lord does not take us down a notch or two, and that perhaps, by a very painful process. He asks, as if in indignation, “Who hath despised the day of small things?” and I believe that He is grieved with any of His servants when they fall into such a state of mind as that, and begin to despise His church because she is despised by the world, and look down on His people as the high peaks of Bashan seemed to regard with contempt the lowly hill of Zion, and therefore the psalmist said to them, “Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in, yea, the LORD will dwell in it forever.”

My special object at this time is to reprove those who despise the earlier and weaker works of grace in the soul. True, it is “the day of small things,” but it is a subject for rejoicing, and is not to be despised. First, I shall speak to *proud professors who despise “the day of small things” in young beginners*. Then I shall have a little talk with *young beginners who despise “the day of small things” in themselves*, and thirdly, I shall speak of *those who do not despise “the day of small things.”* When this question is put to them, “Who hath despised the day of small things?” they can answer, “Lord, you know that we have not done so, we have rejoiced in the small signs of grace in young beginners, and we hope to see great things grow out of them.”

I. First of all, THERE ARE SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS WHO DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS” IN OTHERS.

I am sure I do not know exactly at what point the day of grace begins in some people. There are some who, even before they fully receive the Gospel, have some good thing in them. "Oh, no!" you say, "That cannot be." Well, just think a moment. Before the sower went forth to sow, there was a certain part of the farm which was described as "honest and good ground." There was another part that was like the highway, and another part covered with thorns or stones, but there was something which distinguished the "honest and good ground" from all the rest of the land.

I do not say that it was then bringing forth any fruit to God's glory, but I do say that God had, from a very early period—I do not know when—made that ground ready and fit to receive the seed. So I can believe that, before a man even hears the Gospel at all, there may be an antecedent work of what I may almost call secondary grace—not saving grace, but a making ready of the heart for the reception of the saving grace of God.

In my own experience, I never quite know where I am to put my finger upon the beginning of God's work in my soul. I can tell the very day and hour when I was converted, but I had many stirrings of conscience before that. I know that I was very effectually convinced of sin, but when the gracious work began, I cannot say.

One of the first things that I recollect is lying awake at night because I had done something wrong to my mother, I do not know whether that was not the grace of God working in my heart even then, I think that it was. I am sure that it was, in some measure, the Lord graciously working within me, and making me ready for the more manifest work of His Spirit.

Now, dear friends, do not despise those little things, those preparation works, but whenever you see them in children, or in grown-up people, be thankful for them. Frequently, when I have been receiving members into the church, I have asked of a good woman, "Is your husband a Christian?" and the answer has often been, "Well, sir, he is a very good husband, but I am afraid that he is not a Christian." Then I have inquired, "What does he do with himself on Sundays?" "Oh, sir, he is always at the Tabernacle! He has been attending the services for years, and he is very fond of you, sir. He will run home, and hurry over his tea so as to get to the prayer meeting on Monday, and on Thursday nights, he is never absent."

I have said, "My good woman, does your husband show such love to the Lord's house and to the minister, and yet he is not converted?" "Yes," she answers, "he is not converted, for sometimes he does what he knows is not right, still, his attendance upon the means of grace is a great check upon him. He is a dear good husband, much better than he used to be, but I am afraid he is not a Christian, and that he does not truly pray for pardon."

"Ah!" I say, "let us have a little prayer together about him, and let us firmly believe that we shall have him yet. If a man continues to come where we are constantly firing the Gospel gun, one of the stray shots will hit him yet. Be sure that you encourage him to keep on coming, and mind that you are very kind to him, and help him all you can in finding the Savior, and we will yet rejoice together over him."

When moths fly very near the candle, sooner or later they will singe their wings, there is a great Gospel candle burning here, and I do not doubt that some of these human moths will dash into the flame by and by, so I hope you will encourage them to come here again and again until they are blessedly caught so that they can never fly away.

Such people as I have been describing have very curious whims and fancies, they will take offense at almost nothing at all, so we must tread very softly and tenderly, and not grieve any with who it is in this sense "the day of small things."

I have known some come to Christ at last and trust Him, but it was with such a very little faith that I hardly know whether, in their case, it was faith born or unbelief dying. You remember the poor man who said to Christ, "Lord, I believe," and then he felt as if he had gone a little too far with his declaration, for he drew back and said, "Help thou my unbelief." And these poor halting souls are just in that state, I hope they do believe, but I am sure that they are very unbelieving. They begin to pray, but oh, what queer prayer it is!

Some of them repeat a form of prayer they learned a long while ago, which is quite inapplicable to their present case, but still they do mean to pray somehow. They want to pray, and though it can scarcely be called prayer, yet I expect that God accepts it as prayer, and graciously answers it. They have begun to repent, they have not a very clear view of what sin is, but they know that it is something they would like to get rid of. They are like Paul when he was at Melita, I am not sure that he understood much about snakes and their bites, but when a viper fastened itself onto his hand, he shook it off into the fire directly. So, these people could not define sin theologically, but they wish that they were clear of it, they long to be pardoned. It is “the day of small things” with them, and it is not to be despised.

Ah! dear friends, when a man tries to get away alone, that he may read his Bible, do not despise him. When a tear falls during a sermon, and he brushes it away, and wants to make you believe that there was something the matter with his nose, do not despise him even for that. I have seen that sort of thing happen many a time, and I have been pleased to notice it. We ought to delight in anything and everything that looks in the right direction, and never think of despising it.

Now I want to come direct to the important point—Why ought we not to despise these small things—these feeble beginnings? Especially when there is a little grace in any people, why must we not despise them?

Well, first, *because in the church of Christ, there always were and there always will be babes as well as men.* Do not despise the babes, where are the men to come from if there are no babes? If it happens in God’s family as it does in most families, you will soon find that it will not do to despise the babes. How very grieved all loving parents are when their infants are despised! You may ignore the big son if you like, but do not despise the babes.

So, with regard to Christ’s family, be sure to honor the little ones, take care of them, never stand in their way. When they want to come to Christ, allow them to come. It does not say “draw them,” for they are wanting to come, but get out of their way, and do not hinder them from coming. And whenever you meet with one who has lately been born of God, and who is tender of heart, do not despise him. As long as the family of Christ is to increase, there always must be babes, and babes must never be despised.

Again, dear friends, do not speak harshly to those who are newly born to God, for *you were a babe once.* Yes, yes, though you do not like to be reminded of it, you, great giant that you are now, were an infant once, and you with your deep experience, and your profound knowledge, you who think you can set everybody else right, why once, you hardly knew that twice two made four! You had to begin at the very beginning just like others have had to do, so remember what you used to be, look back to the hole of the pit whence you were digged, and do not begin to despise others who are in the same condition in which you once were.

Remember again, that *the greatest saints in this world, or who ever were in this world, were babes in grace once.* Whether it was Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they all began with little grace and weak spiritual life at the first. Ay, there is not a bright spirit before the throne of God, who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but once was only an infant in spiritual things, and if the greatest were once so little, that is a good reason why we should never despise “the day of small things.”

Besides, dear friends, it should always check every tendency in this direction when we remember that *God made and God loves the very least believer.* You know, a silver sixpence is as really silver as a half-crown, and the Queen’s image on the one is as genuine as on the other. They are current coin of the realm, and I am sure you will not treat with scorn the little pieces of money. Then why should we despise the small coins in Christ’s treasury? When our dear young brothers and sisters are made of the same metal and stamped with the same image as we are, why should we despise them, though we happen to be, or think we are, of somewhat more weight and value in the church of God than they are?

Oh, do not despise the lowly violet that hides its head among the leaves! It is quite as much a flower of God’s making as the finest tulip that airs its beauty aloft, or the most brilliant standard rose that is before your eyes. God made the little things, and God loves them, and as parents have a special love for

their weak and little children, so has God a special favor towards the lambs of His flock, and He takes special care of the seedlings in His garden which have not yet come to the fullness of growth, therefore, do not despise them.

If you do, there is one sentence I would utter that ought to rebuke you very effectually. *Your Master would not despise them if He were here.* Christ has a quick eye to see little graces in His people, and when He sees them, He delights in them. A diamond is a diamond if it be ever so small, and Christ's people are Christ's people let them have never so little grace.

Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ would have carried that lamb in His bosom, why do you refuse to carry it? Why do you overdrive it? Why should there be so often heard stinging words, and keen, cutting, sarcastic remarks about the feebleness of knowledge or the defects of practice, when, if there is but grace in the heart, you and I ought to rejoice to see it?

I have often quoted to you the words of Jerome when he said that he loved Christ in Augustine, and he loved Augustine in Christ. So ought we to love the weakest believers—to love Christ in them, and to love them in Christ. May the Holy Spirit teach us to be like our Master in this respect as well as in all others!

I have finished this word of gentle rebuke when I add that, if you and I do despise “the day of small things,” *the probability is that we shall have to smart for it.* You remember that passage in Ezekiel where the Lord speaks of the fat cattle pushing the weak cattle with their horns and their shoulders, they were big bulls of Bashan, and they were always goring one and pushing against another, because they happened to be weak and sickly, and the Lord said that He would judge between cattle and cattle, and those that had been so headstrong, and so proud, and so cruel, would have to smart for it. The day shall come, my proud brother, when you will be glad to sit at the feet of that young Christian you now despise, I have noticed that sort of thing many a time.

It is a part of my pastoral observation that, when persons who were genuine Christians have been proudly lifted up, they have been made to go down very low till they have envied those they once despised and said, “If we felt as sure of salvation as that dear young man that we judged so harshly, we would willingly enough change places with him, and take what we called his inexperience, and his want of knowledge, if we could be just as simple in our confidence in Christ as he is.”

Therefore, beloved, if you do not want to bring the rod upon your own back, despise not “the day of small things,” but be ready to cherish and comfort all in whom the work of grace has apparently begun even to the lightest extent.

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WHO DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS” IN THEMSELVES. They think that it is very humble to do so, I am not sure that it is; I think it is very foolish to do so.

There are some who despise “the day of small things” in themselves in this way, *they pass by the small things.* Suppose that a young man is impressed under a sermon, with a sense of sin, a wise thing for him to do is to get home as quickly as he can and cry, “Lord, I do not know whether this is true repentance, but if it is not, make it so. Lord, I am half afraid that I am only a stony-ground hearer, and that this good seed will spring up for a little while, and then will wither, Lord, break my stony heart, and do it effectually.”

Be very thankful, dear friends, if you have the faintest spiritual impressions, I know some men who would almost give their eyes if they could but feel anything, but they say that they sit and hear, and the only result is what Cowper said—

*“If aught is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.”*

So, if you have any spiritual feeling at all, do not despise it, but go to God with it, and pray that the work which seems to be begun in you may be carried on until it is complete, and that, if it is not begun, it may begin at once.

When you feel sometimes, in the assemblies of God's house, a softening influence stealing over your spirit, or when, possibly, in the middle of your work—you do not know why—you suddenly feel very tender in heart—or perhaps, walking down into the city early in the morning, before many people are astir, you feel a solemnity quite unusual to you—do not despise it. These little things may lead on to a blessed saving work, and I pray the Lord that you may take care of these dewdrops of grace. If there are but a few tiny drops, and if they are but cared for and valued, the Lord will yet look still more graciously upon you, and send you a copious shower of blessing.

Do not despise anything that looks like grace in your heart. God help you to take it as a gardener at this time of the year takes the little slips and cuttings, and puts them in silver sand to make them grow, that he may have the flowering plants by and by. Use your cuttings, the little things that seem as if they could not have any life in them. God would have you plant them in favorable circumstances that they may grow to His praise and glory.

Some despise “the day of small things” in themselves because *they do not think that any good can come of them*. When I was preaching this morning [See sermon #1739, Bankrupt Debtors Discharged], I thought that perhaps, some poor soul would take comfort to himself, and I said to a brother when I went outside, “I do like sometimes to have a subject which comes rolling up like a sea of grace,” because there are so many people who are like oysters in the riverbeds waiting for the tide to return. I did hope, this morning, that it was a flood tide, and that some of you would open your shells and that the blessed Word of God would come into your very souls. If you do that, it will come in.

The oyster cannot make the sea roll up, but whenever he feels it rolling over him, he says, “Now is the time for me to open my shell,” and when you feel, “Now is the time for me to seek the Lord, now is the day of salvation, now is the high tide of grace,” you shall have the blessing. It is all around you, or else you would not have opened your shell. It is the very flood tide of grace that has made you feel what you do feel. Therefore, be glad, and do not despise it. It may seem a little thing to feel tender and solemn, but it is not so, it is often the beginning of a blessed work of grace, therefore value it highly.

Some I have known some to despise the blessing *by resolutely resisting its entrance into their hearts*. I can never forget some instances of this resistance that I have known. I was preaching once in a certain city, and a gentleman who had been very kind to me was in the congregation, but I saw him get up in the middle of the sermon, and go out of the building. The brother who was with me slipped out after him and said to him, “My dear sir, why did you come out?” He answered, “Mr. Spurgeon has got me in his hands, I am like an India rubber doll, and he can twist me into any shape that he likes. I am afraid that, if I had listened to him for another ten minutes, I would have been converted.”

So off he went, deliberately stamping out as far as he could, the spark of truth as it came toward him. He would not let the good seed grow, he invited the birds of the air to come and steal it away. Do not forget that, although the Lord graciously changes man's will, and He has absolute power over the human will, and makes men willing in the day of His power, yet He never saves anybody against his will, and while the will stands out against God, and is unrenewed and unchanged, the man is still unsaved.

It does seem to me a dreadful thing that people can come to the house of God without any desire to get a blessing, and there cover themselves up in armor of mail, to keep every arrow from getting anywhere near their hearts. That is one method of despising “the day of small things.”

I know some others who despise “the day of small things” because, *if they get a little good in their hearts, they do not try to get more*. If we did not expect a little child to ever grow, we should really be despising it, putting it down as a dwarf or a monstrosity. So, if the grace of God has come into your heart, you will do all in your power to make it to grow and increase, and thus prove that you do not despise it.

I think I have said enough to show that, if any here have the slightest sign of the beginnings of grace, any glimmerings of the divine light, any first outlines of the image of Christ upon their heart, they must not despise them, but they should pray God to bless them, and bring them to maturity. If they do so, I will tell you what God will do, it is hinted at in the verse from which our text is taken, "For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel."

They had begun to build, but it was such a poor paltry piece of work, and the wall was still so low, that they despised it, but when they saw the prince standing there, with the plummet in his hand, and saw stone after stone brought and laid in its place, and their great leader officiating as the chief architect, they said to one another, "See, the prince is there with the plummet in his hand, he is a man who never undertakes a task unless he goes through with it, so depend upon it, the work will be completed."

In like manner, I can see that although it may be very little grace that is in your heart, yet Christ has come with that grace, Christ is building in your heart, Christ is laying the foundation stone, the Prince of the kings of the earth, Christ Jesus, is there with His plummet, and He that has begun the good work in you will carry it on till it is perfected in Glory.

Oh, what a blessing it is to look to Christ with the plummet in His hand and say, "Great Master-builder, I will not despise these foundations because, as yet, they are scarcely seen above the soil, for I know that You, who have begun the good work, will carry it on, and perfectly perform all that You have promised. The temple will yet appear to Your praise where now there seems to be but a tiny heap of stones."

That is the way to cure you of despising "the day of small things" in yourselves.

III. Now, my last point is this. THERE ARE SOME WHO NEVER DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS."

I have time for only a few words on this part of my subject, but I wish them to be very tender words.

First, *true pastors* never despise "the day of small things." Speaking for myself, I can say that I love to see in those of you who are unconverted any sign of serious thought, any intimation of a coming change, any token that you are turning unto the Lord, my heart is gladdened whenever I perceive it. Does anyone think that I despise it? Why, I pray to God continually to bring it to pass! Despise it? I look for it as the reward of my toil, if I did but know that I had aroused thought in any one of you, I should go home happy. If I did but hear that the Lord was bringing a score or two to Himself, I would gladly lie awake at night to bless His name for such a mercy as that.

I do not care for the vastness of this congregation, but I do care for the individual souls in it, and I rejoice most of all over those who are saved out of it. What good is it simply to bring you here, and to have you sitting quietly while I talk to you? It is a waste of time and labor, unless it brings you to Christ, but if I know that any of you are brought to penitence and faith, I am sure that I do not despise it, for I value such blessings above the choicest gold.

And let me also tell you that *your dear parents, your Christian wife, and your godly daughter*, who persuaded you to come to this service, do not despise "the day of small things." I have known some of our members do really extraordinary things in order to get people to come here in the hope that they might be converted.

There was one who, after many attempts, at last induced a man to promise that he would come with him one day, so he went round to fetch him. "Oh, I cannot come!" said the man, "I am making a rabbit hutch." "Well," said the other, "I have one ready made that I will give you." "But," said the man, "I cannot come, I promised to go and see a man who has a pair of pigeons to sell." My friend answered, "I have a pair of pigeons I will give to you if you will come with me."

It was all in vain, he might offer the man what he would, he could not get him. I hope that he has brought him by this time, if not, I know that he will stick to him till he does see him here, and I know another thing, that he will bring the friend to his own sitting, and he will, if necessary, himself stand in the aisle, and pray for him all through the service. Well, now, if he gets his friend to hear the Word, and sees that he is impressed by it, you do not suppose that he will despise "the day of small things," do

you? On the contrary, he will be glad even for the slightest sign of the working of God's Spirit in his friend's heart.

Your godly mother, when she hears that you have been to the Tabernacle, will say, "Bless God for that!" If she finds that you have begun to pray, her heart will leap within her. A dear father, a minister of the Gospel, writes to me and says, "My son had never decided for God till he went to hear you at Exeter Hall, and during the evening sermon, he bowed his head, and gave himself up to the Lord, and now he is proposed as a member of my church. God bless you, sir!"

It is always so with true Christians, they do not despise "the day of small things," but they are glad when their children are brought to Christ, and it is just the same with *all soul-winners*, and I hope that many here are of that class. If they can spy anything like the tiniest midge's egg of grace, they feel so glad, and they watch you, and they say to one another, "Is that light that I can see there in the East?" And the other says, "I do not know, I am afraid it is not." "Oh!" says the first friend, "but I think it is, does it not look a little grey just over there?" "No!" replies the other, "I am afraid that it is not morning light yet." That is how some of us talk about you, we are often talking and praying about you, dear hearers, and we say to one another, "When will So-and-so come to the Savior?"

There is a good man here, whom I pray for nearly every day, and I know that his wife does the same, he loves to come here, yet he is still an unsaved man, but by the grace of God, he cannot remain where he is if prayer can stir him. We will pray him out of it, and bring him to the Savior, may the Lord grant that it may speedily be so!

There is one other Person who never despises "the day of small things," and with Him I finish, and that is, *our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*. He is so eager to see of the travail of His soul that if He spies in you even a desire after Him, He is pleased with it. Believe me; if you have but a spark of desire after Christ, He has a whole furnace of desire after you. Oh, that you would have Him as your Savior! He is free to every soul of you who will have Him, is it not put just so in His last invitation? "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Do not think that He excludes you, you may exclude yourself, but if there is in your heart any wish, any shadow of a wish, anything like a desire for Christ, you may come and welcome. Mercy's gate is wide open, Christ invites you to His house, and to His heart. Oh, come unto Him and come now! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

May His Divine Spirit lead you to believe on Him at this moment! To believe on Him, is to trust Him. Throw yourself on Him, sink or swim. Take Christ to be yours, have you done it? Then you are saved, for "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." His believing is the evidence that he is a saved man already. So, go your ways, and the Lord be with you, but I charge every one of you, meet me in heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 54:1-10

Verse 1. *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.*

In this Western clime, we do not know all the misery which was felt by Eastern women who were childless, they were looked down upon and despised, yet here God bids them sing. And dear friends, if you and I feel as if our hearts have become barren, so that we cannot think of God or raise our thoughts towards Him as we would desire, if we feel that we have become useless, and for that reason our spirit is greatly depressed, let us give heed to this sweet, this charming exhortation of JEHOVAH, "Sing, O barren soul; break forth into singing, and cry aloud," for God can turn our barrenness into fruitfulness, and make us to rejoice exceedingly before Him.

If we are now sighing and crying because we are not what we ought to be, or what we want to be, God can, in the richness of His grace, make us all that we desire. Therefore let us begin to be joyful even before the miracle of mercy is wrought, let us have unbounded faith in God, and expect Him to bless us, even while we are in our lowest state.

2-3. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

This was good news for the poor Gentiles, who were so long spiritually barren, but whose seed was to spread all over the earth. This prophecy has been already fulfilled in a great measure, and the very wording of it is a direction to us if we desire to see the church of God increased. Make ready for God's blessing, you who are pining and groaning for greater things than these, God is about to bless you. Enlarge your tents, lengthen the cords, and strengthen the stakes, prepare for the coming blessing, for you are to have better and brighter days than you have ever known. Therefore be no more sad, but look forward with joyful anticipation to the good things in store for you.

4. *Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.*

I am not going to interpret the passage in its strict connection, but to use it for our comfort and instruction. O you that are cast down, you poor trembling ones that fain would be at one with God, but feel as if you cannot find Him, believe in the Lord your God, and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, for there are glad times coming for you! All your former days of sadness shall be forgotten, and you shall have such joy and delight as you can hardly imagine at present.

5. *For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

Oh, what a blessing that is! This is a wide-spread mercy, "The God of the whole earth shall he be called." My soul, come and hide beneath the shadow of these earth-covering wings, for there is room for you beneath their welcome shelter, and once there, you shall not be banished from that sacred spot, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Thy Maker is thine husband," united to thee in eternal wedlock; therefore, be of good comfort.

6. *For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.*

Poor rejected one, has the world cast you off? Do its sinful pleasures pall upon you now? Listen, "The LORD hath called thee." You are divorced from the world that you may be forever united to Him.

7-8. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.*

What words of comfort lie here to those of the Lord's people who have fallen into spiritual darkness, and come upon evil days! God still remembers you, His wrath is but for a moment, and will swiftly pass away, but His age-enduring kindness which sweeps across the boundless eternity shall be with you forever.

9-10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*

Oh, for grace, oh, for the help of the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon these precious promises, and to feed thereon!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 602, 538

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